

News

Connection

A monthly newsletter for DSHS staff and friends

Quality continues to take center stage as another DSHS team earns Governor's Quarterly Award



Members of the award-winning E-Purchasing Team are: (First row from left) Alice Liou, Ken Moses, Teresa Sapp, Charles Hunter, (Governor Gary Locke), Wanda Emmick, (Secretary Dennis Braddock), Janice Huntley, Diane Daniels; (second row) Nancy Wilkinson, Janice Dahlberg, Kevin Kernan, Kim Hewitt, Paul Knapp, Lindakay Stacey; (third row) Judi Rogers, Lynn Graham-Hoey, Gary Downs, Arlene Crawford, Molly Hughes, Diane de Leon, Jim Judge, Marcus Harris, Bonnie Jacques; (fourth row) Larry Kronquist, Diane Robbins, Darwin Kumm, Matthew Matlock, Mary Brennan, Kim Kirkland, Wolf Fletter, Roger Slack; (last row) Rena Patch, Victoria Burr, Linda O'Sullivan.

Each quarter, Gov. Gary Locke honors one Quality Team from a state agency for the Governor's Quarterly Award for Service and Quality Improvement. The team selected best describes the diversity and depth of improvements that are happening throughout state agencies, according to the Governor.

The DSHS Electronic Purchasing Focus Group was selected by the Governor for this prestigious award in January 2002. Since the Governor issued his Executive Order in 1997 directing all agencies to begin quality improvement programs, eight DSHS teams have been selected for this honor. (To see a summary of previous winners, turn to page 3.)

For years, the process of acquiring goods and services started with filling out a multi-part purchase request, routing for approvals, and submitting to Purchased Service Contracts. Purchasing staff, after awarding a

purchase request to a vendor, mailed copies of the request to different parties for filing, which required handling the same paperwork many times.

Year end, purchasing staff spent long hours making sure stacks of purchases were entered into database and processed for delivery before the cutoff. To prepare expenditure information for the legislature, purchasing staff had to pull all the field orders and calculate manually.

With input from a department-wide focus group and the stakeholders representing Office of Financial Management, State Auditor's Office and General Administration, a new

electronic purchasing system was developed in-house where all purchasing functions from initiating to ordering were automated into a database.

The purchase request is now initiated, approved, and submitted electronically, of which the status can be viewed from the database at any time. A purchase request could be initiated, approved and out for quote in the same day. The average process time has been reduced from 21 to five days. Management and audit reports can be generated within minutes. All records can be

(Continued on page 3)

Inside

Secretary Dennis Braddock talks about his goals for Integration Initiative..... 2

DSHS's litigation picture looking very good 2

See the summary of past Governor's Quality Award winners 3

New unit helps managers with "reasonable accommodation" 5

One Office, One Team: Fife Child Support office pioneers "paperless"

One Office, One Team – That's the philosophy adopted by the staff at the new Fife office of the Division of Child Support (DCS). The office opened this past fall and is pioneering the division's imaging technology to eventually create a "paperless office," as well as focusing on resolving issues by using the call center concept.

DCS has begun the process to convert or transfer all documents relating to an individual's child support case into electronic format through the use of the latest imaging technology. The office's mailroom became fully operational with imaging this past November, as all new docu-

ments that arrive daily are imaged into the electronic format.

Meanwhile, the initial testing of imaging an entire existing caseload (called backfile conversion) was accomplished in December.

Based on the tremendous success and subsequent recommendations, the Fife office has already imaged nearly 25 percent of its entire backfile conversion and hopes to complete the process within the next 90 days.

"Imaging is the future for child support and many others in government," said DCS Director

(Continued on page 5)

The News Connection

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Secretary's CORNER

by Dennis Braddock



For the majority of people who come to DSHS for help, we serve them very well. But for some, their lives and needs are so complex we don't serve them as well as we need to. They require expensive services, never finding what they need to stabilize their lives. These are the people who will benefit most from our Integration Initiative, which will lead us to do a better job of integrating our services both within the department and with our community partners.

The challenge facing DSHS is to remove those barriers that make it difficult for people to access our services in a coordinated, timely manner before they become long-term clients. In January we began six No Wrong Door pilot projects in cities across the state. I also appointed Ed Hidano, a veteran DSHS executive, to lead the department's integration effort.

Nearly 53 percent of our clients need services from more than one program. Case managers in different administrations have historically not had access to the case files of shared clients. These pilot projects are changing that.

The Puyallup Community Services Office is experiencing great success with its No Wrong Door Case Staffing model, under the leadership of Sandy Smith, administrator. Once a week a select team of representatives meet with a client who has been on the Temporary Assistance

for Needy Families program for at least 30 months (clients may only receive TANF benefits for 60 months).

The team has representatives from the divisions of Community Services, Child Support, Vocational Rehabilitation, Children and Family Services, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, plus the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, the Employment Security Department, and community colleges. A mental health specialist from the local Regional Support Network also participates. Together they work with the client to identify what are the barriers to successfully ending the need for TANF benefits.

Jessie Jordan-Parker, Puyallup CSO deputy administrator, shares the story of a 28-year-old single mother of three who was working 12-hour days at minimum wage. She used neighbors and friends for child care, had an 11th grade education, and depended on public transportation to get to and from work.

Through each team member's targeted efforts, within a week the mother got a better paying job with regular hours, now receives Working Connections subsidized child care, and is off TANF. Parker, who has worked in social services for over 30 years, said, "This project is one of the best things I've ever been involved with. I have never seen these kinds of immediate results. We're making it happen today."

The case staffing models offer some exciting examples of how we can make changes quickly to divert people from needing DSHS involved in their lives long term.

Our next challenge is to look at what are the barriers within the department to providing more integrated services: Do we need to reorganize our services? What should we be considering in siting and co-locating staff? How do we maximize our existing resources for our clients when they first come to us?

The Management Team and I are continuing to develop the department's Strategic Plan for the next biennium and beyond, and integration of services will remain one of my top priorities.

As this young mother said, "I was feeling so overwhelmed. You have made it possible for me to achieve in one day what would have taken me months of phone calls and office visits."

Words about our work

Employees, clients, and the public share thoughts on the work we do

Send your thoughts and/or letters from clients to Secretary Dennis Braddock, attention: Letters to The News Connection, P.O. Box (Mailstop) 45010, Olympia WA 98504; via e-mail BraddD@dshs.wa.gov

Dear Division of Child Support,
Almost a year ago, I found a link to your site on "Help for working families" Web site. It was for help in obtaining child support.
I tried on my own, filing the paper work, facing a judge and my ex's attorney in court hearings but I could not get the support I needed because of small things, like filling out the paper work wrong, etc.
Thank you for your help. I now get the child support for my son that both of us deserve. Joanne Minor (Division of Child

Support claims officer) was always available to answer my questions and was a big help.
So was everyone in the Office of Support Enforcement. When I e-mailed you requesting information, someone in your agency responded in less than two hours. I was sent the promised paperwork and your agency took care of everything else.
The extra money means so much to us. It's an extra pair of shoes or Boy Scout dues.

So, thank you.
Name Withheld

Litigation News

By Bernie Friedman, J.D.
Special Assistant to the Secretary
for Loss Prevention and Risk Management

The litigation picture continues to look very good for DSHS. I recently compiled the following data from October 2000 to February 2002.

You might recall not having seen any blazing newspaper stories about adverse DSHS jury verdicts during that time. That is because there haven't been any.

Since October 2000, we have tried 15 cases. In nine of those cases, the jury concluded we had done nothing wrong and awarded the plaintiffs no money. In the other six, the jury awards were minimal.

In fact, the two largest jury awards by far since October 2000 were in personnel cases, not tort cases. One was an award of \$239,000 (reasonable accommodation) and the other was a settled amount of \$350,000 (discrimination) on appeal after the jury verdict.

During the time period mentioned, we settled 59 cases without going to trial. The average settlement amount was \$180,000. This number is skewed high because of two rather large settlements. Of the 59 cases we settled, fully 34 of them were for less than \$100,000.

These numbers are a far cry from the multimillion dollar cases we experienced in the summer of 2000. The results show we have really been doing quite well in court since then.

One key area in which we have been experiencing vulnerability is in risk assessments. Whenever we complete a risk assessment of an individual, and that individual later commits a crime injuring somebody, if the plaintiff can show we made errors in the risk assessment, we will be liable. The errors do not have to be large or even significant. As long as the plaintiff can show to the jury "we didn't even follow our

own procedures," or "we ignored many red flags," we will be held responsible for whatever happens. This is because of the state's "joint and several liability law."
The law states that if what we did was a breach of some duty we had to the plaintiff, and that breach is even one percent responsible for injury to the plaintiff, we may have to pay the entire amount of any judgment if other defendants cannot pay.

We are unlikely to change joint and several liability law, but we can change our behavior. Please devote considerable attention to risk assessments. They may be tedious and time-consuming, but if we don't do them right every time, if we fail to compile all the factual information necessary for a complete assessment, we can find ourselves liable years down the road.

Risk assessments should involve your best professional judgment, but you may be called upon to defend your reasons for making that judgment in the future. Annotate the assessment and support it with documentation. We rarely are held to be at fault for exercising professional judgment. What gets us in trouble is when we can't support the judgments we made, or when we fail to take into consideration all the factors necessary to make a good professional judgment.

In conclusion, things have improved considerably for us in litigation in the last 18 months. With continued emphasis on making informed, professional judgments, I am confident improvements will continue.

Contact Bernie Friedman at (360) 902-7860 or e-mail at friedbh@dshs.wa.gov to discuss loss prevention or risk management.



Governor recognizes impressive achievements of DSHS Quality Teams over last three years

“Taxpayers have demanded a better government and state workers have listened and are working hard to gain the public’s trust. State agencies are continuing to make improvements to our government that save us money, generate revenue and provide better service to all of us. I applaud each agency’s contributions to the quality of service we offer and commit to you that these efforts will continue. Our goal remains firm: Make government work better...” Governor Gary Locke

Over the past three years, eight DSHS Quality Teams have been honored with the Governor's Quality Award. The following is a summary of each team's achievements

April 2001
Journey through the Healing Circle

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Related Conditions (FARC) are birth defects resulting from alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Affected children can be difficult to care for, risking association to crime and dependence on social welfare systems. FAS is the only cause of birth defects that can be completely avoided, but education is key.

A team produced “Journey through the Healing Circle,” a series of training resources for foster parents, clients, tribes, schools, social service agencies and medical professionals. It demystifies FAS/FARC in a sensitive and nonjudgmental way, providing a realistic overview of the impact of alcohol use during pregnancy. Improved community awareness and prevention programs saved \$93,600 in foster care costs.

July, 1999
LifeBook Project

Most of us have “Baby Books” lovingly prepared by parents to chronicle childhood and give a sense of identity and belonging. Most kids leaving foster care had no such record of early life experiences.

The LifeBook Project Team developed a “how-to-create a LifeBook manual” for compiling stories, pictures and documents from a child’s personal history. The manual contains sample paragraphs about sensitive adoption issues, written in a healing manner. It saves workers and volunteers many hours in preparation and allows 75 percent of foster kids the opportunity to take a legacy with them to their new adoptive home.

July, 1999
Improving Medication Distribution at Western State Hospital

It took 200 hours to refill patient medications at Western State Hospital. Nurses performed pick-ups and deliveries, medications created storage problems and wards experienced downtimes while prescriptions were being filled. These issues created confusion and errors in medication dispensation.

Hospital pharmacy, nursing and computer staff analyzed the process and determined methods for improvement. They decided to purchase an automated unit-dosing dispensing machine, which fills prescriptions at near 100 percent accuracy using easy-open packets. Pharmacy staff deliver and refill medications in less time and allow nurses relief from the process. The equipment uses less expensive bulk medications, so the hospital saves another \$50,000 annually!

April, 1999
Alpha Collection Team 14, Division of Child Support

Low collection rates and morale caused this team high absenteeism and turnover and poor customer service. Alpha Collection Team 14 designed a process to simultaneously review cases for collection enforcement and training. They set a goal to increase collections 45 percent, reduce overdue reviews 60 percent, and increase the percent of paying cases and dollars collected per case. This new attitude and process allowed the team to exceed targets and dramatically improve morale. Their efforts are a model to other DSHS teams.

January, 1999
Improved Case Management for Long Term Care Clients

Annual audits conducted by Aging and Adult Services Administration (AASA) staff indicated a number of inaccuracies in client records. A

project team used a special monitoring tool to find 41 common problem areas identified by social workers and community nurse consultants. The team used existing staff with profound knowledge to provide in-depth, targeted training on each. The monitoring tool documented a 71 percent improvement in accuracy and a 100 percent increase in accuracy on calculations of client care costs. Financial staff also determines eligibility 10 minutes faster per case, resulting in 700 staff hours saved each month.

January, 1999
Nursing Facility Rate Setting Process

The Aging and Adult Services Administration had legislative mandates to develop a new Nursing Facility Medicaid payment system. An Office of Rates Management team examined ways to streamline and consolidate work. They noted that existing payment systems took five years for final resolution of allowable costs and that an entire unit worked its lengthy “settlement” process. By redesigning functions, payments are now completed in two years or less. Drawn-out settlement processes were eliminated. A total of \$15 million in unallowable costs was identified for one year, producing direct program savings and reduced nursing home payment growth.

(Continued on page 4)

Governor’s Quality Award

(Continued from page 1)

maintained electronically for six years. Paper forms and mailing are no longer in need.

Results:

- Reduced annual costs by eliminating paper forms (\$10,500), mailing (\$4,950), retention of manual files, and storage space.
- Reduced staff time by eliminating duplicate input of purchasing information by the field and in Purchased Service Contracts (12,000 hours per year).
- Created the capacity to electronically maintain a six-year history of all purchasing transactions, of which the data can be used for management reports and projecting future purchase needs.
- Reduced the average process time (from customer request to purchase being awarded to a vendor) by 16 days by incorporating electronic approval and routing functions in the database.
- Allowed online viewing of the status of purchase requests, anytime, from any DSHS work station, which significantly reduced telephone inquiries. Managers can see complete information on purchases of their unit, office, division or administration. Security, purchasing practice and Separation of Duty is clearly defined and can be monitored throughout the purchasing process.

Savings and reductions in FTE hours remained in programs and were made available for programs to use for client-related tasks.

Team members: DSHS: Bonnie Jacques (sponsor), Alice Liou (facilitator), Wanda Emmick, Lynn Hoey, Diane DeLeon, Roger Slack, Teresa Sapp, Janice Huntley, Rena Patch, Judi Rogers, Mary Brennan, Charles Hunter, Robert Beets, Kim Hewitt, Marcus Harris, Mathew Mattlock, Ken Moses, Diane Daniels, Gail Hesselholt, Joanne Grip, Nancy Wilkenson, Laura Ettinger, Lien Ngo-Tran, Kelly Buckner, Kevin Kernan, Janis Dahlberg, Arlene Crawford, Bridgett Butcher, Jay Minton, Kim Ellis, Peter Carlson, Wolf Fletter, Linda Tullis, Gary Downs, Ellie O’Dell, Molly Hughes, Darwin Kumm, Oscar Pierce, Larry Kronquist, Diane Robbins, Lorie Christoferson, Linda O-Sullivan, Connie Minton, Lora McKiddy. State Auditors: Jim Judge and Paul Knapp. OFM: Pat Sanborn and Wendy Jarrett.

Governor honors DSHS Quality Teams

More Governor Award winners...

(Continued from page 3)
January 1998

Social Service Payment System (SSPS) Year 2000 Conversion Project Team

The SSPS authorizes payments to client service providers who care for more than 100,000 DSHS clients. This team has determined that conversion could best be accomplished by using existing state employees.

The plan to hire a consultant was scrapped, saving the Department \$1,000,000. In addition, the team's efforts moved the conversion project from four months behind to four months ahead of schedule. This was one of the first major state systems to complete the Year 2000 conversion process.

July 1998 Program Simplification Team

A team from the Economic Services and Medical Assistance Administrations reduced regulations governing the new welfare program. Four manuals containing 2,700 pages of WACs, policies, and procedures were being used to determine eligibility for cash, food stamps, and medical benefits. Now one, integrated manual does the job with 490 pages and 44 percent fewer WACs.

The team projects an annual savings of \$182,000 in printing costs and staff savings equivalent to one FTE.

MAA holds Kick-Off Ceremony for 4th Annual Quality Day

On Feb. 7, the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) held the Kick-Off ceremony for Quality Day 2002. Quality Day is MAA's annual quality conference featuring display booths, a featured speaker, videos, door prizes and refreshments. This will be MAA's 4th annual Quality Day and everyone is invited to attend. Quality Day 2002 will be held on May 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Town Square Campus, Buildings 1, 2, and 5, Olympia.

The booths are designed and staffed by natural work teams and quality improvement teams to celebrate successes, share lessons learned and best practices. The Quilts for Kids team will have their quilts on display until the presentation to the Children's Administration in the late afternoon. The Quilts for Kids project provides handmade quilts for children in foster care. Volunteers meet on Saturdays to make the quilts.

Each of the eight administrations has steering committees to assist in leading the department's efforts to continue providing quality services to the residents of the state of Washington. For more information on the quality improvement activities occurring throughout the department, contact Alice Liou, internal quality consultant, at (360) 902-7783 or e-mail at LiouAH@dshs.wa.gov.

Burien CSO helps clients make life changes and achieve self-sufficiency through WorkPlus

By Frances Carr, Community/Public Relations Manager
Region 4 Community Services Division

In January, the Burien Community Services Office (CSO) held a WorkPlus orientation to assist clients that are finding the road to employment very challenging due to a number of circumstances in their lives.

WorkPlus for GA-U (General Assistance - Unemployed) is a program that provides assistance to GA-U recipients. It is designed to help clients overcome barriers that may be interfering with their ability to work and become self-sufficient.

WorkPlus participants can receive job training, obtain work experience, vocational assessment, transportation and work clothes support. They can also receive help in writing an effective resume, and learn effective interviewing techniques.

Burien CSO has developed the largest WorkPlus program in King County. The office has been working internally and with community partners to create employment-oriented opportunities for GA-U clients since April 2001.

Currently, 79 Burien clients are enrolled in WorkPlus and 14 are employed. Approximately 50 participants are upgrading their work habits and job skills by participating in short-term training courses through Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI). WorkPlus participation has enabled nine Burien clients to completely get off financial assistance.

The elements that contributed to a strong start for the Burien WorkPlus program include early commitment by CSO supervision and management that resulted in the allocation of significant staff time and effort to WorkPlus services.

In addition to these services, Julie Johnson, Burien WorkPlus manager, and Sarah Paige, WorkPlus social worker started the Burien WorkPlus Women's Support Group. The support group is very empowering for WorkPlus women who are attempting to return to work but have self-esteem and other barriers to work through.

At the orientation, Johnson explained the attributes and qualifications required of WorkPlus participants: Motivation is key! Additionally, participants must be a GA-U recipient, and able to follow

through on agreements. In exchange, the Burien CSO will offer a \$100 certificate to those obtaining a job for at least 30 hours a week. The CSO will also help to arrange medical benefits once the participant has returned to work.

A panel of community providers presented information on their agencies and services:

- Shane Perkins, Seattle Goodwill employment trainer talked about the new Center that Seattle Goodwill is opening in Burien, which has a goal of working with community agencies to help clients become successful.
- Anicka Simmons, Washington Women's Employment & Education (WWE), talked about and provided brochures on services WWE can provide to WorkPlus participants.
- Tessie Gomez of SVI spoke about getting the technical skills needed for the workplace. SVI provides training in a variety of areas such as acute care hospital nursing assistant, business computer, medical office technicians, and multiple trades. SVI has made an ongoing contribution to the Burien program by helping to orient and motivate participants to use the free short-term training opportunities available through SVI.

One of the most encouraging by-products of the orientation was learning that each of the panel members (with the exception of Gomez) had been on public assistance at one time or another — or had participated in either the WorkFirst Program or Seattle Goodwill training. These articulate and knowledgeable individuals were perfect examples to clients on how good programs, encouragement, self-motivation, commitment, hard work, a little luck, and follow through pays off and can lead to the road of self-sufficiency.

Another very encouraging part of the orientation was having the opportunity to talk with Lisa Younger, WorkPlus WEX assistant (Community Jobs Work Experience). Younger has been working part-time in the Burien office and also with one of the CSOs job placement providers, TRAC Associates, gaining work experience. Younger's goal is to apply, and take tests to get on the state employment register — then a job, a better job, a career.

Diversity Calendar

Each month *The NewsConnection* features special dates, provided by the Division of Access and Equal Opportunity. If you have a special date you would like included in the next calendar, e-mail Patte King at Kingpl@dshs.wa.gov. Not all dates can be included due to length constraints.

MARCH

- NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH
- 1 Wales: St. David Day
 - 6 Ghana: Independence Day
 - 8 International Women's Day
 - 10 Harriet Tubman Day
 - 19 Australia: Canberra Day
 - 17 Ireland: St. Patrick's Day
 - 20 Spring begins
 - 21 South Africa: Human Rights Day
Baha'i & Persian New Year
 - 22 India: New Year's Day
 - 24 US: National Medal of Honor Day
Christian: Palm Sunday
 - 25 Greece: Independence Day
 - 27 Jewish: Passover begins at sundown
 - 29 Taiwan: Youth Day
Christian: Good Friday
Madagascar: Commemoration Day
 - 31 Christian: Easter

APRIL

- NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH
- 6 Scotland: National Tartan Day
 - 7 UN World Health Day
Daylight Savings Time begins
 - 8 Birthday of Buddha
 - 14 Pan American Day
 - 17 American Samoa: Flag Day
 - 18 Zimbabwe: Independence Day
 - 20 Israel: Independence Day
 - 21 Baha'i: Holy Day of Rivdan
 - 22 International Earth Day
 - 23 Turkey: Children's Day
 - 27 Holocaust Remembrance Day
South Africa: Independence Day

DAEO takes lead in technical assistance for “reasonable accommodation”

In response to recommendations from a DSHS Quality Team review concerning reasonable accommodations, the Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Unit (DRAU) has been established to coordinate the department’s efforts to provide technical assistance to management in implementing Personnel Policy 582 (PP582). The new unit is located within the Division Access and Equal Opportunity (DAEO).

The department’s policy on reasonable accommodation, PP582, provides guidance to DSHS managers on how to comply with state and federal disability civil rights laws (Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Washington State Law Against Discrimination (RCW 49-60)).

DRAU will provide staff training in key disability areas. Technical assistance services will be provided regionally to administrations to assist them in their efforts to implement the policy.

DRAU will provide the following services to management:

- Reasonable accommodation training to managers, supervisors and agency staff. The 2002 Reasonable Accommodation schedule is available on the DAEO Web site at <http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/daeo/>;
- Leadership in coordinating DSHS resources to help address reasonable accommodation requests;
- Identification of resources for reasonable accommodation aids and devices;
- Technical advice in potential effective accommodations for

employees with specific disability characteristics given particular job categories and duties;

- Assistance with providing appropriate documentation to demonstrate good faith compliance efforts and improve risk management; and
- Technical assistance in the interpretation and implementation of PP582. Areas include:

- Essential Functions
 - Reasonable Accommodation
 - Medical Documentation
 - Disability Separation
- Effective immediately, DSHS managers with reasonable accommodation questions or problems should contact the following regional liaisons:

Regions 1 and 2, Jana Matthews, (509) 456-6119
Regions 3 and 4, Jan Fellores, (206) 272-2147
Region 5, Frances Bailey, (253) 476-7076
Region 6 & HQ, Sonja Bogan, (360) 586-7052
Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, Steve Waldren, (253) 566-5760
Western State Hospital, Steve Waldren, (253) 566-5760

In addition, Dave Brown, manager of DRAU, is available at (360) 586-4024 to consult with managers as necessary. DRAU staff are committed to working with department staff to ensure that the department’s policy and process is implemented in a manner that is effective for management and employees, and is fair and timely.

Health care records subject to increasing privacy requirements



Members of the DSHS Privacy Workgroup are: (First row from left) Kindra Benavidez, Finance, Amber Gillum, JRA, Marie Myerchin-Redifer, DSHS Privacy Officer, Marcia Stickler, MHD, Sue Poltl, DDD, (Second row) Mary Cotter, MAA, Alyson Daly, CA, Dave Curtis, DASA, Carrie Wade-Nurse, DVR, Solomon Uwadiale, MSA, John Metzler, ISSD, (hidden) Bruce Brower, ESA, (Back row) Andy Renggli, MAA, Allen Ziegler, SCC, Lois Wusterbarth, AASA, Tracy Sanford, Legislative Relations, Mike Garrick, RDA. Not pictured: Pam Anderson, AAG, Billy Berkley, MHD, Jerry Britcher, ISSD Security, Debra Eisen, Contracts, Judy Fitzgerald, Budget, Nancy Gnepper, MSA, Kristal Knutson, Secretary’s Office, Kelly Robison, ODHH, Dori Shoji, ESA, Cheryl Threatt, ISSD, Paige Wall, PRP.

Staff throughout the department are being challenged to examine how their programs manage health care information about our clients, and ensure the privacy of that information.

As a result of the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), covered entities that maintain and share health care information must streamline the management of health care business practices by using standard transactions. In addition, they must safeguard the privacy of this sensitive information.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule, to be implemented by April 14, 2003, guarantees patients new rights and protections against the misuse or unauthorized disclosure of their health information.

This rule covers individually identifiable health information, termed “protected health information,” that is kept or shared through any medium, including hard copy, oral, or electronic records.

Last July, the department formed the DSHS Privacy Workgroup to provide leadership and plan for implementation of the privacy requirements for clients in DSHS programs.

Over the next few months, members of this workgroup are meeting with appropriate people within the administrations and programs for assistance in developing an inventory of current business processes that gather and share health-related information. Members of the workgroup are interviewing staff in headquarters and the regional and field offices to find out:

- Who is collecting protected health information?
- What information is collected?

- How is it being collected?
- Where is this information stored?
- Who has access to this information?

The Privacy Rule gives patients more control over their protected health information through the following rights.

- Patients have the right to:
- Receive notice of privacy practices;
 - Have access to, copy, and amend their information;
 - Request an accounting about any disclosure of this information;
 - Request restrictions on any disclosure; and
 - Request that communication about personal health information be conducted in a confidential manner.

A primary restriction of the Privacy Rule, according to Marie Myerchin-Redifer, DSHS Privacy Officer, is that programs can only disclose information that is the “minimum necessary” for the purpose requested. For example, a personal services care provider for Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) only needs access to health care information necessary to deliver personal care. On the other hand, a DDD family counselor may need access to health care information on all family members.

By April of next year, the department must have policies and procedures in place that identify who needs access to health care information in order to carry out their job duties.

For more information on the Privacy Rule and a list of the Privacy Workgroup members, see the Privacy Web site at <http://maaintra.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa/privacy.asp>.

Fife Child Support goes paperless

(Continued from page 1)

Georgiann DeKay. “We are just scratching the surface of this technology, and we are excited about the possibilities in efficiency and improved business processes that will result with its implementation and expansion.”

DeKay noted that depending on budget and equipment allocations, the division hopes to convert the mailrooms and backfile conversions of all caseloads in its other nine offices throughout the state by early 2003.

“Despite the tremendous challenges that lie ahead, our goal is to manage caseloads in a paperless environment before the end of the current biennium of June 30, 2003,” she said.

The Fife office’s call center – “One Call Does it All” Customer Service Team – is staffed with Support Enforcement Officers (SEOs) and Support Enforcement Technicians (SETs) to handle 90 percent of the calls.

Customers always receive immediate assistance rather than being transferred to SEOs. Only specific and complex calls are routed to the SEOs.

The call center also routes all “oral hearing” requests to two settlement SEOs who attempt to resolve hearing issues at the local level.

Tribal issues are addressed by a Legal Resource Team, whose members are spread out in the office as another part of the One Team concept.

The Fife office is focusing on handling all transactions by mail, Internet, fax, or telephone, thereby reducing or eliminating the need for customers to physically come into office.

An open house was held on Jan. 17, as staff welcomed elected officials, local community, business and civic leaders, as well as other DSHS staff. The office is located 6416 Pacific Highway East, Exit 135 off Interstate 5.

On April 27 get your car washed and help children in foster care

On April 27 car washes will be happening across the state to raise money for the Governor's College Scholarship Fund to help send children in foster care to college. The fund-raiser will also focus attention on foster care and the urgent need for more foster homes in the state to help some 11,000 children who need safe and supportive places to stay.

Secretary Dennis Braddock said, "These children in foster care often have endured some very tough and even tragic experiences. We need to do what we can to help them attend college and find rich and rewarding lives."

"We want to have car washes in every town in Washington because each community is home to children in foster care," said Daryl Daus, director of Families for Kids Recruitment Resources, a branch of Lutheran Community Services, that provides foster and adoptive parent recruitment services for the state. Lutheran Community Services and DSHS are partnering to sponsor and organize the car washes. Local volunteer organizations are being encouraged to hold the car washes.

"Children leave foster care at age 18 or shortly after, when they graduate from high school. Few of them have the financial resources necessary to support themselves, let alone pay for further education. We're hoping communities will reach out to these kids, not only through financial donations, but also by exploring ways of providing the emotional and moral support every child needs to make a successful transition to adulthood," he added.

All DSHS employees are encouraged to get their cars spruced up at one of the local car washes on April 27. Daus said organizers hope the statewide car wash will become an annual event. The idea evolved from a suc-

cessful fund-raiser by the clerical staff in the Yakima regional office last year.

For more information on local car washes or to volunteer, please contact the following coordinators:

- **Region 1** (Northeast Washington, including Spokane) Brandi Seekins: (509) 343-5058; e-mail: bseekins@lcsnw.org
- **Region 2** (Southeast Washington, including Ellensburg, Walla Walla and Clarkston) Gail Brown (509) 735-6446; e-mail: cbrown@lcsnw.org
- **Region 3-4** (Northwest Washington, from King County to the Canadian border) Nancy Underwood Long (425) 776-6325; e-mail: nunderwoodlong@lcsnw.org
- **Region 5** (Pierce and Kitsap counties) Stephenie Burbach: (253) 272-8433; e-mail: sburbach@lcsnw.org
- **Region 6** (Olympic Peninsula and Southwest Washington including Olympia and Vancouver) Omi Cummings (360) 423-8542; e-mail: bobomi@kalama.com



Reminder

In cases of local, state, and national emergencies check out the DSHS toll-free employee information line

The DSHS employee information phone line will provide timely information to DSHS employees about office closures and work schedule changes during local, state, and national emergencies. The toll-free number is 1-866-DSHS-EMP (1-866-374-7367). Also, be sure to check out the DSHS Internet Web site (<http://www.wa.gov/dshs>) where information for employees will be posted as needed.